

Briefing Background Notes

S-2843

13 Oct 68

Summary

1. Circumstances surrounding deliveries of military shipments by two Communist Chinese ships at Sihanoukville between 20-25 August 1968 are suspicious, but provide no firm evidence that all or part of the shipments were destined for Communist forces in South Vietnam.

2. That important quantities of arms and ammunition are moved to the Communist forces in the southern part of South Vietnam through Cambodia is no longer in question. We still do not know, however, if this materiel is (1) brought into Cambodia through the port of Sihanoukville, and, if so, whether the supplies are destined directly for the Communists or smuggled from Cambodian military stocks, (2) smuggled over or along undeveloped areas of Cambodian coast, or (3) merely stored on Cambodian territory after having transited Laos and/or South Vietnam. [Although new intelligence suggests -- perhaps more strongly than in the past -- that VC-destined supplies may be arriving at Sihanoukville, the new information is still far from conclusive.]

3. Evidence of illicit arms movements across the Cambodian border to Communist forces south of the Mekong continues to mount, however.

munitions for Communist forces south of the Mekong moves from south to north through the border area. This contrasts with the basic north - south movement of Communist arms north of the Mekong. The north - south flow does not

appear to extend as far south as the Mekong, although the movement of the small daily requirements of Communist forces south of the Mekong for munitions -- less than 3 tons per day -- would be difficult to detect.

4. The well-established Vietnamese Communist network<sup>of</sup> supply routes through Laos has been significantly expanded and improved, particularly since the third quarter of 1967. There is no evidence that the Communist supply system has been unable to meet the higher level of requirements noted this year, although some minor and temporary distribution problems have occasionally developed, and supply losses due to Allied actions have caused ammunition shortages in some areas.

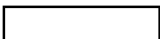
5. Despite the adequacy of their logistic system, the Vietnamese Communists undoubtedly would take advantage of opportunities to supply their forces in the distant lower IV Corps area by sea, and appear to be providing at least supplementary quantities by this route. Because operation Market Time is considered largely effective in sealing off Vietnamese coastal waters, we believe that these arms <sup>would be</sup> landed within Cambodia.

6. We still see no conclusive evidence of high-level official Cambodian collusion in the delivery of munitions to Communist forces in South Vietnam.

On the contrary, Sihanouk appears to be insisting that his forces take all necessary steps to protect Cambodia's borders against foreign forces, whom he accuses of supporting dissidence among native elements. In the past six months, hostile clashes between Cambodian and Vietnamese Communist troops have occurred with unusual frequency. Sihanouk's attitude casts serious

doubt on reports that Chicom ships deliver arms to Sihanoukville for transfer to the Vietnamese Communists. Smuggling is rampant in Cambodia, however, and all things considered, it appears the most likely means for moving supplies through southeast Cambodia to Communist forces in IV Corps south of the Mekong. 1400

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Continuing deliveries of military equipment to Cambodia raise the question of whether these deliveries are over and above Cambodian needs. The lack of information on quantities and types of military equipment included in military cargoes as well as in many suspect unidentified seaborne deliveries to Sihanoukville prevents us, however, from coming to any hard and fast conclusions on whether deliveries of arms and ammunition ostensibly for the Cambodian military is out of proportion with the Cambodian order of battle. Cambodia is certainly ill-equipped in relation to its historically unfriendly neighbors -- Thailand and South Vietnam. It certainly remains possible, however, in a country where corruption is not unknown for military supplies, even if not present in excess, to be siphoned off to the Communists.

Communist Smuggling of Arms and Ammunition Over or Along  
the Less Populated Cambodian Coast

Some indications that the Communists were successfully smuggling arms and ammunition to South Vietnam over or along the less-populated Cambodian coast were reported in our July memorandum -- ER 121 68-84 which was coordinated with INR and DIA. A few more intriguing reports on this topic have been received more recently.

One report had arms and other supplies smuggled to the VC on motorized junks from the area of Khemarak Phouminville (near the Thai border) along the coast of Cambodia to South Vietnam.

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Two other reports concern VC smuggling of chemicals and explosives over

the Cambodian coast. One report,

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stated that ships

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from Singapore unload chemicals destined for the VC onto small craft near the

Ream naval base. The shipments allegedly are moved by truck to the VC. In

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the second report,

Cambodian naval vessels patrolling the Bay of Kompong Som seized over 20 tons

of explosives destined for the VC. The explosives were being transported in

junks manned by Vietnamese.

We continue to receive numerous reports of Communist-related movement of arms and ammunition across the Cambodian border. Most reports concern the southeastern border area. [REDACTED]

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Movement has been reported via sampan, oxcart, truck, and porter. In almost all cases the sources -- [REDACTED] -- do not know (or do not say or are not asked) how the materiel reached the pickup points near the border. Thus, it is conceivable not only that the supplies may have been brought in by sea to Cambodia but also that they may have been stored in Cambodia after having been moved through Laos and South Vietnam.

Several other recent reports concerning -- as have numerous reports in the past -- the movement of arms and ammunition from Phnom Penh or elsewhere in Cambodia by Cambodian trucking firms to Communist forces in the border areas. Again, little mention is made of how or from where the materiel arrived at Phnom Penh or the other points in Cambodia.

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Deliveries of Military Equipment to Cambodia

1. Cambodia's imports of military equipment enter only through the port of Sihanoukville. [No deliveries of military equipment have been detected to Phnom Penh.] Almost all of these deliveries come from the USSR and Communist China and are carried in merchant ships flying the flags of those countries. In addition, a few small shipments have come from France on French-flag ships. There is no evidence of any deliveries from North Vietnam.

2. Arms deliveries to Cambodia have occurred under military assistance agreements between Cambodia and the USSR and Communist China. These consignments have been consigned to the Cambodian Armed Forces and their delivery to FARK installations has often been confirmed. There has been no firm evidence in the past that these deliveries have gone to consignees other than FARK.

3. Shipments consigned to FARK have occasionally included civilian goods, such as cement and foodstuffs. These deliveries, as well as unidentified cargoes, have often been included in estimates of military deliveries by intelligence analysts in other agencies, thereby inflating the actual amount of military deliveries.

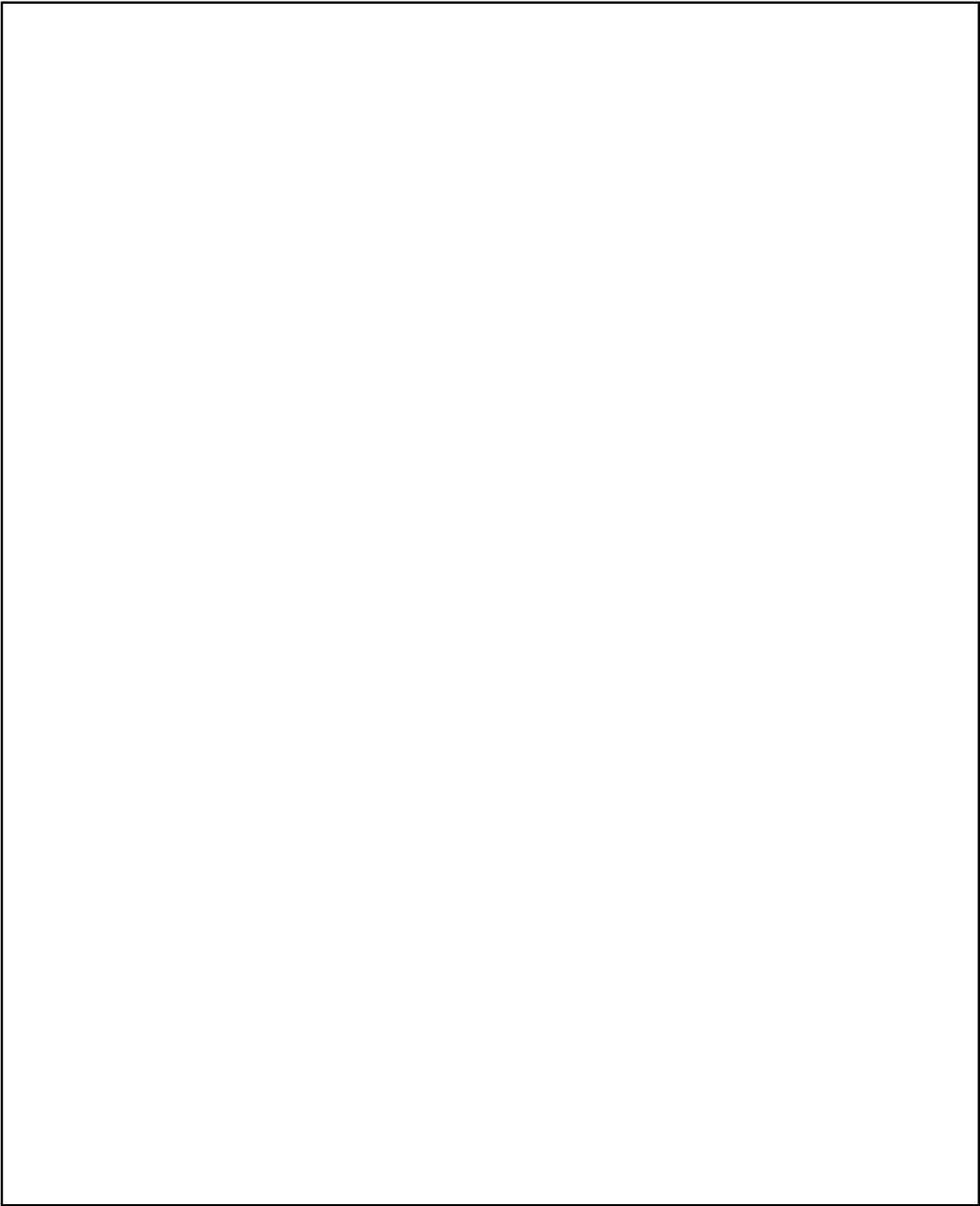
4. The unloading of military cargoes at Sihanoukville is usually accompanied by extra security measures such as the presence of military personnel and the cordoning off of sensitive areas.

5. During the last four years, there have been four or five major military shipments a year as follows:

-- In 1965 there were four military shipments -- three from China with machine guns, mortars and recoilless rifles and one from France with Skyraider aircraft.



-- In 1966 there were five military shipments -- three by Chinese ships (artillery, AA guns, small arms, and ammunitions) and two by Soviet ships under an agreement signed with the USSR in March 1966. Soviet deliveries included MIG-17's, 100 mm antiaircraft guns and ammunition. In addition, ~~there were~~ very small quantities of military trucks, small arms and ammunition were discharged from three French ships.



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The Supply Routes for Communist Forces  
in South Vietnam

1. The "Ho Chi Minh Trail" continues to be the principal supply route for the external needs of the Communist forces in South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese have been improving the original road net and building new military roads since early 1965. By March 1967 the Communists had developed within the Laotian Panhandle a road network capable of moving at least 550 tons of supplies by truck all the way to the borders of South Vietnam during the dry season. Beginning in the last quarter of 1967, at the end of the monsoon season, the Communist road construction and repair effort was noticeably intensified.

2. As a consequence of the repairs, improvements, and extensions completed during the 1967-68 dry season the estimated wet-season capacity for continuous truck movement as far south as the A Shau Valley was increased from 50 to 100 short tons a day. An additional 50 tons of capacity has been made available for movements along routes leading into Quang Tin and Kontum Provinces. Throughout the rainy season which is now drawing to a close, construction workers have been active in maintaining the essential routes. For the first time the Communists have been able to maintain a significant logistic flow into southern Laos during the wet-season as shown below:

	Short Tons Per Day	
	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>
May	90	120
June	20	135
July	5	110
August	5	75

3. The trend to high levels of logistics activity became apparent in the last quarter of 1967 at about the same time the enemy was mounting preparations for the Tet offensive. During the period January throughout August, this year, an average of 190 short tons a day entered southern Laos, of which 125 short tons were available for stockpiling in Laos for shipment to South Vietnam. During 1967 an average of 90 short tons a day entered Laos, of which 50 short tons were available for shipment to South Vietnam.

4. The net increase in Communist strength coupled with the expansion of enemy operations has contributed to a substantial increase in Communist resupply requirements from external sources in 1968. But the tonnages estimated above are sufficient to meet these requirements and also to provide substantial tonnages for stockpiling.

We estimate that external requirements for the Communists in South Vietnam now total about 90 tons per day. Sixty tons are food of which 35 tons originate in Cambodia. Twenty five tons of food from Cambodia are moved directly across the border into the rice deficit parts of South Vietnam. Ten tons of Cambodian food transit Laos en route to South Vietnam, 15 tons of food are moved from North Vietnam directly across the DMZ into I Corps, and 10 tons are moved from North Vietnam via Laos. The remaining 30 tons, weapons, clothing, equipment and ammunition, transit southern Laos en route to I, II, III and northeastern IV Corps Areas.

Daily external supply requirements by Corps Areas are as follows:

Class of Supply	Short Tons Per Day by Corps Area				Total
	I	II	III	IV	
Class I	25.00	18.00	17.00	--	60.00
Classes II and III	4.22	2.81	2.69	1.99	11.71
Class III	negl	negl	negl	negl	negl
Class V	5.59	2.19	3.88	2.19	16.85
	37.81	23.00	23.57	4.16	88.56

Study of substantial source materials of all sorts leads us to the conclusion that supplies which transit southern Laos move over roads and trails in South Vietnam and Cambodia at least as far south as Svay Rieng Province Cambodia (The Parrot's Beak). There is also evidence that the area of the Parrot's Beak is used as a source of supplies for the region around Saigon, and northeastern IV Corps (north of the Mekong). We have no evidence, however, that supplies, which transit southern Laos are stocked or consumed in the portion of IV Corps southwest of the Mekong River. The reports we are receiving currently suggest that supplies for this portion of IV Corps are either received via Cambodian territory, or are moved in small craft along the Cambodian coast en route to coastal points.

Transportation Routes Supporting VC/NVA  
Actions in III and IV Corps

Recent analysis of logistical transportation routes used by VC/NVA forces presently operating in South Vietnam indicates that their selection by the enemy is based principally upon what type of material is to be moved. The routes used for the transportation of rice, in general, are intra-provincial in nature. The exception here being areas of operation, tactical and/or support, which could be designated as rice deficient in nature. The route of movement of other material needed by and available to VC/NVA forces in RVN, for example, medical supplies and cloth, is apparently determined by areas of availability which are for all practical purposes country-wide. Once material or food has been procured it is moved to base areas or cached for later movement. In the case of weapons, ammunition and more directly war-oriented material, however, the intra-provincial nature of transportation routes must breakdown due principally to the lack of the availability of these materials.

These materials are principally available to VC/NVA forces operating in RVN from North Vietnam either directly across the DMZ or through the Laotian Panhandle down the "Ho Chi Minh" trail. It is by this latter route that materials not available to VC/NVA forces in RVN are moved to base areas in II and III Corps and apparently to base areas in IV Corps roughly north of the Mekong River. There are strong indications that enemy base areas south of the Mekong River are supplied directly across the Cambodian border with arms and ammunition originating from that country. The basis for this last statement lies in several interrogation reports in which it was stated that supplies were moved from

[redacted]

south to north along the RVN - Cambodian border in areas well south of the Mekong River. Furthermore, in an extensive examination of interrogation reports and captured documents extending back to mid-1967 there was not one instance where arms and ammo were reported moved from north to south in the area immediately north of the Mekong River, despite the fact that there were numerous reports of arms and ammo being moved from the northwestern tip of Tay Ninh Province to Parrot's Beak area. These shipments prior to the Tet offensive through to the present have either been cached in Western Tay Ninh Province and Hau Nghia Province or moved south easterly into Long An Province to support units south and southwest of Saigon whose major area of responsibility appears to be the Saigon area.

Enemy units north and east of Saigon appear to be supported through eastern Binh Long Province and all of Phuoc Long Province as administered by Rear Services Group 86. [redacted]

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[redacted] Furthermore, Base Area 740, in Cambodia, just east of Duc

Cap in Quang Duc Province, has long been a major source of arms and ammo, especially prior to and during the Tet offensive. This base area is believed to be supported by Base Area 70<sup>2</sup> in Cambodia just west of Pleiku [Province].

[redacted] strongly believes that this Base Area (70<sup>2</sup>) has been a major transshipment area for sometime and even more so lately due to the recent completion of a road extending from the Tri-Border area to Base Area 70<sup>2</sup>. This base area is also believed to support VC/NVA operations in western II Corps.

In summation, it appears that, due to the confirmed north - south movement from the Tri-Border area to the Parrot's Beak area, II and III Corps are supplied with arms and ammo from North Vietnam and areas in southern IV Corps are supplied via Cambodia with materials originating or transiting in Cambodia. However, two important qualifications must be made:

1. This north - south movement should not be construed to completely eliminate the addition of arms and ammo into the pipeline from Cambodian sources. There have been many reports, albeit unconfirmed, of truck shipments of ammo to areas in northern Phuoc Long Province while there have been no confirmed truck movements from Base Area 70X (west of Pleiku) to Base Area 740 (west of Duc Lap).
2. The arms and ammo requirement of enemy forces in the areas which are reportedly supplied from Cambodia south of the Mekong River at, at the most, on the order of 3 short tons per day.



Communist Logistical Requirements  
in South Vietnam

NVA and VC regular and administrative support forces in South Vietnam currently require on the order of 290 tons of supplies per day, with about 90 tons of this amount -- roughly 30 percent -- obtained from external sources. (See Table I). I Corps and III Corps account for about 69 percent of the total daily Communist external resupply requirements. External supplies comprise about 25 percent of the total daily food supply requirement, 30 percent of the Class II and IV requirement (weapons and equipment), and 85 percent of the ammunition supply requirement.

Material Losses

Material losses suffered by Communist forces in South Vietnam during the third quarter of 1968 have been at levels higher than the quarterly average for the first six months of 1968. Monthly losses of food, ammunition, and weapons have increased from an average of 632 tons a month in January - June 1968, to 700 tons a month during the third quarter. Losses of weapons and food declined slightly in the third quarter, but there was a significant increase in ammunition losses. Whereas Communist ammunition losses totalled about 82 tons a month during the first six months of the year, ammunition losses during the third quarter have averaged 183 tons per month, an increase of 123 percent.

Losses by Corps Area

Material losses during the third quarter of 1968 were unevenly distributed by Corps area. The major share of supply losses continue to occur in the I Corps and III Corps areas, accounting for about 86 percent of total enemy supply losses. (See Table II). The heavy loss of supplies in these areas

reflects the relatively higher levels of combat which have been taking place in these two Corps areas. I Corps and III Corps account for 88 percent of Communist food losses, 86 percent of ammunition losses, (with some 62 percent of ammunition losses in I Corps area alone) and 79 percent of weapons and equipment losses.

#### Logistic Impact of Material Losses

Total enemy losses of supplies in South Vietnam accounted for about 26 percent of their estimated daily external requirement for supplies during the third quarter of 1968. A comparison of enemy losses and requirements by Corps area suggests that the logistic impact may be relatively severe in some areas. Enemy forces in the I Corps area are much closer to the supply bases in North Vietnam and are therefore in a better position to replenish weapons and ammunition supplies than are forces in the III Corps area. Conversely units in the III Corps area can replace lost stocks of food more easily than can enemy forces located in some of the rice deficit areas of I Corps, but have greater difficulty in replacing weapons and ammunition losses.\*

#### Impact on Combat Effectiveness

Substantial losses of essential combat equipment especially ammunition supplies during the third quarter have contributed to a disruption of many planned military operations, and have aggravated the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese problems of ammunition resupply and internal distribution. Communist battalion-sized initiated attacks have declined roughly 50 percent on a monthly

\* Rice deficit areas of III Corps can easily be supplied from Cambodia. It is more difficult to supply the rice deficit areas of I Corps via Laos or across the DMZ.

average during the third quarter compared to the first six months of this year. Weapons losses, which show a close correlation with NVA/VC combat deaths and levels of VC/NVA military actions, however, have declined markedly in the past three months. The comparatively low level of actions initiated recently by the Viet Cong or North Vietnamese can be attributed at least in some measure to Allied success in uncovering and destroying enemy caches of essential war material. Ammunition shortages must continue to impede Viet Cong and North Vietnamese initiative in certain areas.

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The substantial reduction in the volume of

Communist small arms and crew-served ammunition expenditures in the past few months may in large part be attributed to the losses of ammunition, but the enemy's expenditure rate could also be attributed to his strategy, intentions, etc. Enemy small arms ammunition expenditures in July and August averaged 48 tons a month in January thru June period; crew-served ammunition expenditures also dropped noticeable during July and August.

The cumulative impact of these supply losses have made it increasingly difficult for Communist forces to mount sustained military offensives against Allied forces. Allied spoiling operations have probably been the principal problem for the enemy in I Corps. Critical food shortages, due in part to Allied rice denial operations, continue to inhibit enemy forces in the northern provinces. In III Corps, Allied penetration of forward and rear enemy staging areas has resulted in the capture of large amounts of munitions, foodstuffs,

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and other supplies essential to Communist combat operations, and has been a major factor in pre-empting or postponing sustained attacks upon Saigon or other targets in III Corps.

Thus, even though the enemy has moved large amounts of military supplies to South Vietnam principally via southern Laos, he nevertheless is influenced by properly placed stocks. The flow from the supply pipeline is substantial in terms of his requirements and stocks must be large in the area as a whole. But substantial stocks are not available in places where they are needed. The greatest impact on the enemy from supply losses therefore results from out capture of pre-positioned stocks designed to support a planned action or offensive. These are the types of supply caches we have captured, particularly in III Corps. The capture of these supplies has surely delayed if not changed enemy plans. We, nevertheless, do not believe that he would improve his position in this regard by suddenly arranging to receive large amounts of stocks through Sihanoukville.

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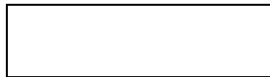


Table 1

Current Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Supply Requirements

<u>Corps Area</u>	<u>(Short Tons Per Day)</u>		<u>External Requirements as a Percent of Total Requirement</u>
	<u>Total</u>	<u>External</u>	
I	105.07	37.31	36
II	70.04	23.00	33
III	67.13	23.57	35
IV	49.61	4.8	8
Total	291.85	88.68	30

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Third Quarter 1968 Estimated Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Supply Losses  
as a Percent of External Requirements, by Corps Area  
(Short Tons Per Day)

Corps Area	External Requirements					Supply Losses**					Losses as a Percent of External Requirements
	I Food	II and IV Clothing and Equipment	III POL	V Ammo	Total	I Food	II and IV Clothing and Equipment	III POL	V Ammo	Total	
I	25.00	4.22	negl	8.59	37.81	5.10	1.03	negl	3.78	10.91	29
II	18.00	2.81	negl	2.19	23.00	1.30	.12	negl	.61	1.03	4
III	17.00	2.69	negl	3.88	23.57	6.62	.66	negl	1.46	8.74	37
IV		1.99	negl	2.19	4.18	1.44	.48	negl	.24	2.16	52
Total	60.00*	11.71		16.85	88.56	14.46	2.29		6.09	22.84	26

\* Cambodia provides about 35 short tons per day, North Vietnam 25 short tons per day.

\*\* Based on material losses sustained by VC/NVA forces in the third quarter 1968. Loss data is preliminary.

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		20 Oct 68
TO: LP		
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REMARKS:		
<p>P/s substitute these copies for the equivalent page of S-2843 in [ ] file. The redo contains info that was given DDIER orally on Sunday 13 Oct 68. This was finally provided by IS on 22 Oct 68.</p>		
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ROOM NO.	BUILDING	EXTENSION

FORM NO. 241  
1 FEB 55REPLACES FORM 36-8  
WHICH MAY BE USED.

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